**“The Great Valley” – By Laura Sardone**

There once was a 14 year old boy named Kiplagat who lived with his family in California. He was a runner and he loved the warm climate of California and that there were many people there for him to run with. Kiplagat, however, had not always lived in California. He had grown up in the Great Rift Valley in Kenya and was called Kiplagat because he was born at sunset. Every morning, Kiplagat would jump out of bed to go for a run in the Valley. As he would run, the sun would begin to rise and would trace out his path for him. Kiplagat always followed the path of the sun as he ran and he felt that each day, his connection to nature grew stronger and stronger. Every day, Kiplagat would return home from his run with a solid coating of fiery red earth on his feet and he would feel blissful and thankful about his daily journey through the Valley.

Despite missing that feeling of running in the Valley, Kiplagat had managed to find a beautiful park in California where he ran with his running team every day and managed to feel that same connection to nature that he used to feel back home. That feeling, however, began to change one day. On one of his morning runs, he noticed people had begun to dump old tired throughout the park. Kiplagat could not figure out where they were all coming from until one day, he followed the trail of tires and noticed that a Waste Management Facility had just been built in the park. As the months went by, more and more tired were piled up, leaving only a small path for Kiplagat to run through.

The nearby Waste Management Facility had completely transformed what was once his natural sanctuary. In a way, the tire yard resembled the Great Rift Valley in shape and size but this was not the type of valley that he was used to or that he wanted to run through. Kiplagat used to feel safe and warm when in the Valley in Kenya. In this valley, he felt cold, scared and alone. There was one other feeling that Kiplagat couldn’t shake, and that was guilt. He felt somewhat responsible for the accumulation of waste as he knew that his family produced waste on a daily basis as well. He hoped that one day, other people in the community would come to see this place so that they may understand what their beautiful park had turned into. For Kiplagat, the price of losing his park was too high and he made a commitment to change his production of waste so that no other runners have to see their sanctuaries destroyed by human industry.

